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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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in Picture

Free health care given to locals in northern Rakhine State

A nurse vaccinates women as part of a health care programme of the mobile medical team of the Rakhine State Health Department yesterday at Mazay Kyun in Yathedaung Township. **PHOTO: THAKKA** **(NEWS ON PAGE 6)**

Independence Day to be convened with five objectives

THE central committee for the 70th Independence Day celebration held its first coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with an announcement of five objectives for the national festivities in January.

The celebration of the 70th Independence Day will include five objectives for the day, it was announced at yesterday's meeting.

"The five national objectives are: to safeguard and protect the non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of the National Solidarity and Perpetuation of Sovereignty by the entire ethnic people; to work hard for emergence of a constitution which meets the democratic norms and can guarantee a democratic federal union; to make more efforts for implementation of the peace process; to reach the goal of "eternal peace" through political dialogue by cooperating between all national races of

SEE PAGE-3

Towards people-centred development

More investment in disaster counter-measures needed: Vice-President

VICE President U Henry Van Thio stressed the need to evaluate the effectiveness of Myanmar's existing mechanisms in mitigating the impact of disasters, inviting governments, local and international organisations and the private sector to invest more in short-term and long-term disaster counter-measures.

"It is impossible to significantly reduce the number of affected population globally without preparedness and prevention," said U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as the chairperson of the National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC).

Speaking at the ceremony yesterday to observe the International Day for Disaster Reduction, 2017, in Nay Pyi Taw, he urged the government and the private sector to understand the underlying risks and make informed decisions for their businesses and development work.

The country's people are more accessible to the information related to the impending disasters; however, very few people are likely to apply the disaster risk information in their lives. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gave guidance to both the national and local governments recently to take into account the prevailing climate change phenomena in preparing their development planning.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio.

"We will have to suffer a lot, when the development gains in place are destroyed by natural disasters. Since we cannot get rid of natural hazards, what we can do is just to mitigate their impacts by means of preparedness and prevention before disaster," he said.

In the first semester of year 2017, there were 149 disaster strikes in 73 countries across the globe, according to The International Disaster Database. Those catastrophes claimed 3,162 lives, affected 80 million people and cost US$32.4 billion in direct economic losses.

SEE PAGE-3

U Win Myint receives MRCS chair

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Win Myint holds talks with Dr. Daw Mya Thu, Chair of the Myanmar Red Cross Society. **PHOTO: MNA**

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Win Myint received Professor Dr. Daw Mya Thu, Chair of the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and party at the Pyithu-Hluttaw's guest room in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, matters relating to works conducted and humanitarian assistance provided by the MRCS were discussed. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Red Cross Movement provides cash and utensils to returning local people

In a ceremony held in Sittway yesterday afternoon, Red Cross Movement provided cash assistance and utensils to local ethnic nationals who are returning home.

In the ceremony, volunteers from (Rakhine) State Red Cross Society, Yangon Region Red Cross Society, township Red Cross Society and well-wishers led by Rakhine State Red Cross Executive Committee chair U Ko Lay provided cash and utensils to local ethnic nationals.

People who were displaced by the attacks of ARSA extremist terrorists in Maungtaw region were returning to their villages as the area is now stabilized.

A total of 2,877 persons were each provided with personal hygiene items, mosquito nets, blankets, cans, dried noodles and kitchen utensils and Ks 45,000. From 29 September until 13 October, Ks 129.4 million were presented to returning people at Buthidaung port, said U Kyaw Myint Wai, head of Buthidaung Township Red Cross Society.—Win Min Soe (IPRD) ■

Opening Ceremony for Children's Literature Festival in Monywa

An opening ceremony for a children's literature festival that includes an exhibition of children's literature and a book fair was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall of Monywa University yesterday under the co-sponsorship of the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Education and Sagaing Region Cabinet.

The ceremony was opened with a ribbon-cutting by Dr. Pe Myint, Union Minister for Information, Dr Myint Htwe, Union Minister for Health and Sports, Nai Thet Lwin, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs, Dr Myint Naing, Chief Minister of Sagaing Region Cabinet and students.

A book shop is crowded with students and visitors. **PHOTO: AUNG MIN HAN**

At the opening ceremony, children from basic educational schools performed a concert by singing a theme song of the festival for children's literature.

"Festivals for children's literature are being held with the aim of developing reading habits in children with enjoyment. In other words, it aims to nurture children with a view to bringing up children to be conceived with the spirits of good citizens who are greatly interested in social activities, and thence to becoming well-qualified adults through erudite learning forever, that is, to producing excellent citizens in the future and well-qualified countrymen", said Dr. Pe Myint.

Afterward, Union Ministers Dr. Myint Htwe and Nai Thet Lwin made speeches, followed by words of thanks from Dr. Myint Naing, Chief Minister.

A variety of performances were presented by students — "Ah Pyo Daw Yein," by three schoolgirls from Parami Private School, "Mingalar bar" a song by eight schoolgirls from SHS 3 Monywa, "Sagaing Thu Ah Hla Ba Yin Ma," a song by 16 school-girls from Chinzu SMS (Branch), "Shwebo Thanakha," a song by nine schoolgirls from SPS Nyaungbin Zay, "Doo Bat Wine," a song by schoolboys from Katoegone SMS (Branch) and "Byaw," a song by schoolgirls from SHS 2 Monywa. Union Ministers, the Chief Minister and party then inspected the book selling shops and children's literature showrooms, encouraging children and students who were in attendance. The Festival for Children's Literature in Monywa and the book fair will be held till 14 October, in which performance programmes, competition for poem recitation, story-telling contests, impromptu speech contests, origami contests, painting competitions, game matches and literary talk shows plus a workshop on speed reading are to be included, it was learnt.—Aung Min Han ■

School Children participate in outdoor activity. **PHOTO: AUNG MIN HAN**

Experts demonstrate traditional Martial Art. **PHOTO: AUNG MIN HAN**

Independence Day to be convened with five objectives

FROM PAGE-1

the Union with the Union Government and to work hard for promoting the private sector, which is the driving force for the country's economy, and to be able to boost the socio-economy of the people," said Vice President U Myint Swe, in his capacity as the chairman of the committee.

The meeting was attended by Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Union Minister for Education, Dr Myo Aung, chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, Maj-Gen Myint Maw, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, Deputy Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, high ranking Tatmadaw officers and officials.

Vice President U Myint Swe addresses the meeting of the central committee for the 70th Independence Day celebration. **PHOTO: MNA**

At the meeting, the central committee chairman and Vice President said today's meeting was convened in order to hold the 2018 70th Independence Day ceremony and related events successfully in a politically meaningful way.

For the 70th Independence Day ceremony to be held successfully in accord with the national aims, the office of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar had issued notification 72/2017 on 29 September 2017 forming a 36-member Central Committee for Convening the 2018 70th Independence Day, designated nine sub-committees under the Central Committee and assigned duties and responsibilities.

Five national objectives were set to hold the 70th Independence Day and related events in a politically meaningful way.

The nine sub-committees are the sub-committee for holding State flag hoisting and saluting ceremony, the sub-committee for holding and preparing invitations to the State flag saluting ceremony, the sub-committee for holding the reception and dinner, the sub-committee for the fireworks display, the sub-committee for security, the sub-committee for information, the sub-committee for the President's message on Independence Day, the sub-committee for health and the sub-committee for holding sports activities.

As per annually-held formalities, there will be morning and evening events attended by State Leaders, Government Leaders, diplomats, local and international non-government organizations, and invited guests. Emphasis must be placed on security of the attendants. Independence Day sports events are to be held on sports grounds and school grounds instead of blocking and closing roads, added the Vice President.

There was a need to avoid weaknesses and shortcomings by sub-committee wise coordination based on past years' experiences and sub-committee heads to monitor and oversee their sector wise works. All are invited to suggest and discuss year-by-year improvement and systematic conduct of the sub-committee-wise assigned duties, said the Vice President.

Afterwards, the Secretary of the Central Committee, director-general of the office of the Union Government explained the formation and assigning duties of each sub-committee.

Next, chairmen and officials of the sub-committee for holding the State flag hoisting and saluting ceremony, the sub-committee for holding, preparing invitations to the State flag saluting ceremony, the sub-committee for holding the reception and dinner, the sub-committee for the fireworks display, the sub-committee for security, the sub-committee for information, the sub-committee for the President's message on Independence Day, the sub-committee for health and the sub-committee for holding sports activities gave Power Point presentations of the status of their respective works.

At the end, the Central Committee Chairman and Vice President responded to the discussions and suggestions made by the sub-committees and delivered a closing speech.—Myanmar News Agency ■

More investment in disaster counter-measures needed: Vice-President

FROM PAGE-1

The Asia Region has gained the championship in terms of the number of disaster occurrences, casualties and economic loss from disasters, officials said.

Two decades ago, an estimated 1.35 million people lost their lives due to disasters, and of them, it is known that tsunami is kill more people on a global scale compared to other natural hazards, while floods and drought bring the highest long-term economic hardships, statistics show.

The International Day for Disaster Reduction was designated in 1989, and in accordance with the Resolution 64/200 of the United Nations General Assembly held on December 21, 2009, every 13th October commemorates IDDR event.

It is annually celebrated worldwide with a specific theme since 2000. Myanmar has celebrated the IDDR commemoration every year since 2010 with the theme: "My City is getting Ready". From 2011 to 2015, themes with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as children, women, disabled persons, the elderly and Indigenous knowledge are set up by year.

Myanmar is now heading towards "The People-Centered Development", the right time to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction Measures into our development endeavors simultaneously, the vice-president said.

With that in mind, the Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (MAPDRR), 2017 was launched with the engagement of all the stakeholders on 9th October.

In MAPDRR 2017, the State Counsellor calls for the constructive cooperation of our people who are the backbone of our country in building a truly disaster resilient Myanmar.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio looks at photos displayed at the International Day for Disaster Reduction, 2017. **PHOTO: MNA**

Following U Henry Van Thio's address, Ms. Xiaojie Fan, Resident Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, read out a message sent by the UN special envoy on disasters.—Myanmar News Agency ■

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17,000 took overseas jobs last month

MORE THAN 17,000 Myanmar workers officially accepted overseas jobs in eight countries last month, according to figures released by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

In September, 15,805 workers out of 17,143 went to neighbouring Thailand, while 692 others were legally sent to the Republic of Korea, followed by 346 individuals to Japan, 267 workers to Malaysia, 17 to Singapore, eight to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), seven to Qatar and one to Macau.

In addition, over 16,400 local job seekers accepted jobs domestically in various states and regions during September.

Among the most popular regions, the commercial city of Yangon was ranked first with over 10,957 new employees, followed by Bago Region with 1,563 and Mandalay Region with 1,231, Magway Region with 469, Sagaing Region with 377, Ayeyawady Region with 369 and Taninthayi Region with 253.

Job seekers receive overseas jobs in eight countries in September. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

Among states, over 500 job hunters took jobs in Mon State, while 221 others seized employment opportunities in Shan State, 133 in Rakhine State, 123 in Kachin State, 59 in Kayin State, 44 in far-flung Chin State and 14 in Kayah State.

The Nay Pyi Taw council area offered jobs to 146 people last month.

Concerted efforts are being made by the ministry to create more employment opportunities for both domestic and overseas job hunters through a new online labour exchange management system, which serves as a bridge between employers and employees.—GNLM ■

Peace Music Festival Singing Contest, 2017 Level 2 and Peace Musical Songs

By Zaw Gyi

U Myint Htwe, director-general of MRTV said that level 2 music contests will accept songs composing about peace.

Peace music festival singing contests, 2017 are being held under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Information and MRTV, in support of national reconciliation, internal peace and building up a federal democratic union, and national peace process, at the designated cities.

Contests of level 2's first and second stages will be held in Mandalay on October 21 and 22, with stage 3 and 4 to be held on October 28 and 29 in Nay Pyi Taw.

10 finalists selected from level 2 will not be allowed to take part in the contest with the singer's favourite songs as in level 1. They must contest in four stages in level 3. First stage will be held in Nay Pyi Taw on November 5, with the three stages to be held in Yangon on November 12, 19 and 26.

In holding level 3 contests, referees' marking system and SMS voting from audience will be exercised.

Music contest Prizes will be awarded—K 30 million to the first prize winner, K 20 million to the second prize winner and K 10 million to third prize winner. The contests will be broadcast after 8 pm news-program from MRTV channel. And it can also be watch on www.facebook.com/mrtvwebmediaportal and www.facebook.com/peacemusicfestival. ■

Police continue to investigate death of fisherman in Andaman Sea

POLICE are still investigating the death of a middle-aged fisherman in the Andaman Sea near about 50 nautical miles north-west of Hnatpyaw Island in Ye Township, Mon State.

According to police, U Aung Kyaw Myint, 43, was found dead on a fishing vessel at around 4 a.m. on Thursday. He was found by U Kyaw Swa Win, a helmsman on the same vessel, together with four other fishermen on board. No wounds on the body were reported after an investigation, police said. In the police report, the helmsman said he granted permission for U Aung Kyaw Myint to take a rest on the vessel as he had drunk heavily and was not able to work at that time. The body of the man was taken to the town's general hospital for a post-mortem examination. Police say that the investigation is ongoing to find the cause of death and possible perpetrators.—Htut Htut (Ye) ■

Ngwe Hnin mushrooms grow well in Myanmar

With the increased cultivation of Ngwe Hnin (commonly known as snow fungus, silver ear fungus and white jelly mushroom) in the Yangon region, the sawdust which is used as a raw material for Ngwe Hnin cultivation is becoming scarce, according to a report in the Myawady Daily yesterday. Local growers are expanding the cultivation of Ngwe Hnin mushroom as local consumption increases. Organisations are also providing training courses on Ngwe Hnin mushroom cultivation. As more trainees begin to cultivate Ngwe Hnin mushrooms, sawdust now needs to be ordered from as far away as Mudon, in Mon State.

"This year we have ordered the sawdust from Mudon and Mawlamyine township," said Ko Nyein Tun, the in charge of the Mushroom Association.

Currently, a viss (1.63 kilos) of the Hnin Hmo (snow fungus) variety fetches Ks2,500. The mushrooms are cultivated mostly in Hlegu, Htigyaing, Dagon Seikkan, South Dagon, North Dagon and East Dagon.—GNLM ■

Traders start to purchase pigeon bean and mung bean from local farmers

By May Thet Hnin

A farmer works on a farm as she harvests beans at a village near Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

THE price of pigeon bean and mung bean has declined in the local market while Myanmar has suspended exporting various pulses to India. In order to control the broken bean market, traders have formed a committee and will purchase 30,000 tons of pigeon beans and Mung beans starting from 12 October for the first time, said U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seed Merchants Association.

The committee planned to purchase 10,000 tons of pigeon beans at Ks400,000 per ton and 20,000 tons of mung bean at Ks500,000 per ton.

The committee will make a contract with each local farmer to buy a minimum of 50 tons to a maximum of 360 tons of pigeon bean and mung bean from each farmer. The local farmers have to make the contract, which is regulated by the committee. If the local farmers want to extend the contract, they have to finish the old contract.

"Yesterday, we already bought 360 tons of pigeon beans. If we get the expected amount, we will decide at the next meeting whether we continue to buy the beans or not, he added.

To purchase the beans, sesame association merchants have contributed Ks50 billion. Also, the association has submitted a proposal to the government to provide an additional Ks50 billion.

According to India's amended import policy, India is to buy only 200,000 tons of pigeon bean and 300,000 tons of mung bean and green bean from Myanmar. Therefore, the price of various Myanmar pulses have declined in the local market.

The market for mung beans, pigeon beans and green bean cultivated in Myanmar rely only on the India bean market. Myanmar exports about 1.5 million tons of beans to India annually. ■

Myanmar-ASEAN trade exceeds $4.3 bn in first five months of this FY

EXTERNAL trade between Myanmar and other ASEAN member countries over the first five months of this fiscal year exceeded US$4.3 billion, according to a monthly report of the Commerce Ministry released yesterday.

From April to August, the import of commodities from ASEAN trading partners was $2.85 bn, while export value reached $1.49 bn in total.

Neighbouring Thailand is ranked first on the list of top five ASEAN traders with $1.89 bn, including $1.38 bn from normal trade and $512 bn from border trade, followed by Singapore with $1.26 bn, Malaysia with $457 million, Indonesia with $373 mn and Viet Nam with $321 mn.

Bilateral trade with the Philippines stood at over $18.115 mn. However, trade with Brunei, Laos and Cambodia were lower than $2.5 mn.

Myanmar usually exports a wide variety of agricultural products, dried and fresh marine products, minerals and industrial finished goods. The major imported products cover consumer goods, electronic devices, capital goods, automobile and accessories, and intermediate goods.

The trade with ASEAN countries was $8.697 bln in 2011-2012 FY, $8.411 bln in 2012-2013 FY, $11.038 bln in 2013-2014 FY, $12.604 bln in2014-2015 FY and $10.432 bln in 2015-2016 FY.—Shwe Khine ■

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Free health care given to locals in Yathedaung, Rakhine

By Myint Maung Swe and Aung Kyaw Oo

The medical team provides health care to locals in Yathedaung. **PHOTO: THAKKA**

A mobile medical team from the Rakhine State Health Department has toured northern Rakhine, providing free health care services to local people.

"We provide not only health care but also nutrition to the local people," said Dr U Kyi Lwin, the leader of the medical team which gave health care to people in Mazay Kyun area in Yathedaung Township.

There are about 26 villages in the Mazay Kyun which is separately located from Yathedaung and Sittway.

At the Kutaung Station Hospital there, the medical team provided health care to 261 out-patients, nutrition care to 20 villager, health care to 10 pregnant women and gave educative talks to 73.

At the village of Anaukpyin Bengali Village, 206 patients received medical check-ups, 57 children aged under five received vaccination and 26 women were given vaccination.

The team delivered nutrition to 100 villagers and carried out educative talks to 88 and transferred one patient to Sittway Hospital. The team comprising six doctors and five nurses will go to Buthidaung and Maungtaw to provide health care to locals. ■

Displaced people return home in Buthidaung and Maungtaw

By Myint Maung Soe, Aung Kyaw Oo

Due to restoration of peace and stability, local nationals who were displaced because of ARSA extremist terrorists' attacks are now beginning to go back home.

One of the military officials in the region said, "Now that regional stability had been regained, people who abandoned their locations due to terrorism start to return to their former places.

Today, displaced people taking shelter at Mrauk-U conventional rescue camp are going to return to Buthidaung and Maungtaw regions." Those people are being transported by Tatmadaw-owned vehicles to jetties in Sittway. On Friday, 45 from Lawka Man Aung rescue camp in Mrauk-U, 30 from Tein Nyo rescue camp and 39 from Pauk Taw Pyin rescue camp—a total of 114, left for their places, it was learnt. ■

Union Minister U Thein Swe receives US Ambassador

Union Minister U Thein Swe holds talks with US Ambassador and party yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe received Mr. Scot Marciel, Ambassador of the United States to Myanmar and party at the Ministry office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday at 3:45 pm.

During the meeting, matters relating to step by step implementation for peace , stability, reconstruction and development in Rakhine State, negotiation between Myanmar and Bangladesh to repatriate people who were in Bangladesh, scrutinizing and repatriation work process by setting up repatriation camps based on 1993 repatriation experience, implementation of issuing NV cards and national verification work based on report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and status of United States of America cooperating and assisting in these works were discussed.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Live broadcast of ceremony commemorating second anniversary of NCA signing

A ceremony commemorating the second anniversary of the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) will be held at 10 am on Sunday, 15 October at the Myanmar International Convention Center-1 (MICC-1) Nay Pyi Taw.

The ceremony will be broadcasted live starting from 9:45 am on MRTV and Myanmar Radio and live-streamed from the MRTV Facebook page.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Public talk in Kawhmu Township

Public Talk with a title "Youth and Social Media" will be held in Kawhmu Township Community Center from 1 to 3 p.m. on 15 October.

Thingangyun Township Yangon Region Hluttaw representative U Nay Phone Latt, Kawhmu Township Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Kyaw Swe Win, Information and Public Relations Department Deputy Director General Dr. Daw Thida Tin and Ma Thinza Shun Le Yi of Yangon Youth Network will participate in the Public Talk and interested person can come to listen. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Rakhine State Soical Affairs Minister Dr Chan Tha comforts patients receiving treatment at Buthidaung Hospital. **PHOTO: THANT ZIN WIN**

Rakhine State Social Affairs Minister, UNA meet locals in Buthidaung

Dr Chan Tha, Rakhine State Minister for Social Affairs and UNA United National Alliance met with local residents from Maungtaw at Buthidaung yesterday morning, giving words of encouragement.

Dr Chan Tha and UNA Group met with displaced local nationals taking shelter at Mingalar Myo Oo monastery and patients taking medical treatment at Buthidaung hospital, cordially speaking with them.

Afterward, Dr Chan Tha and party discussed with Maungtaw district administrator matters about events of extremist terrorists' attacks and rehabilitation of Maungtaw region. Then they went to no 1 border guard police control office (Kyikanpyin) and discussed with Myint Toe situations of security.

U Mahn Kyaw Nyein, general secretary of Karen National Party, a member of UNA said, "UNA has political parties such as Rakhine Party, Mro Party and others in this region. So they had sympathy for local nationals and came here to give encouragement. As regard this, UNA has programs to give aids they can."
—Naing Lin Kyi and Thant Zin Win ■

Chile's President Michelle Bachelet receives and speaks with refugees from Syria after arriving in the country, as part of a resettlement programme for families affected by war or conflict in Santiago, Chile, on 12 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Chile welcomes more than 60 Syrian refugees

SANTIAGO — Chilean President Michelle Bachelet welcomed more than 60 Syrian refugees to the country's capital of Santiago on Thursday, as Chile joined other Latin American nations in offering safe harbour to families fleeing Syria's civil war.

At a ceremony at the country's airport in Santiago, Bachelet greeted 14 newly arrived Syrian families, who will be resettled in furnished homes with social benefits, including monthly stipends, schooling, healthcare and language classes.

"We know you have struggled and what we hope is that, in our country, you will find a place to rebuild your lives," Bachelet said.

More than 2 million people fleeing wars or persecution have joined the ranks of the world's refugees in 2017, according to the United Nations, even as the United States and countries in Europe have begun to implement ever more restrictive asylum policies. The humanitarian crisis has prompted several South American nations, including Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Colombia, to begin accepting small numbers of refugees from Syria.—Reuters ■

Turkish forces set up positions in Syria's Idlib

BEIRUT — Turkish forces that entered Syria's Idlib province late on Thursday have started setting up observation positions that appear aimed at containing a Kurdish militia, a senior rebel involved in the operation said early on Friday.

"The allied Turkish armed forces have entered Syrian territory and begun setting up observation posts," said Mustafa Sejari, an official in a Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebel group.

Turkey sent a convoy of about 30 military vehicles into rebel-held northwest Syria through the Bab al-Hawa crossing in Idlib, rebels and a witness said.

President Tayyep Erdogan announced the deployment on Saturday, saying Turkey was conducting a "serious operation" with rebel groups it supports, as part of a "de-escalation" deal it agreed last month with Iran and Russia in Kazakhstan.

Turkey has been a big supporter of rebels fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad throughout the war. But since last year Ankara has focused on securing its border, both from jihadists and from Kurdish forces that control much of the frontier area inside Syria.

The Astana agreement with Assad's foreign allies Russia and Iran involves reducing warfare in several regions of Syria, including Idlib and adjacent swathes of the northwest, the most populous rebel-held area.

Tahrir al-Sham, a powerful jihadist alliance that controls much of that territory, is not party to the de-escalation deal, and is at odds with some of the rebel groups that Turkey supports.

However, its forces gave an escort to the Turkish convoy late on Thursday, witnesses said, indicating that there might not be any fighting between them.

Residents of northwest Syria and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have reported intense air raids on Idlib and nearby areas for months.

The convoy was heading towards Sheikh Barakat, a high area overlooking rebel-held territory and the Kurdish YPG-controlled canton of Afrin, the witnesses said.

"(Turkey's deployment is) in line with Astana 6 resolutions to ensure the area is protected from Russian and regime bombing and to foil any attempt by the separatist YPG militias to illegally seize any territory," said Sejari.—Reuters ■

Families fleeing Syria's Raqqa say air strikes bring heavy toll

RAQQA, (Syria) — Air raids by US coalition warplanes have intensified in recent days as Kurdish and Arab militias seek to drive surrounded Islamic State militants from their last strongholds in Syria's Raqqa — but the toll on civilians has been severe.

Hundreds of civilians fled the city on Thursday, many wounded and malnourished after being trapped for months by fighting between Islamic State and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Those who fled said the sheer intensity of the bombardment appeared to have made militants shift their positions, retreat or hide underground, giving civilians a window in which to escape.

Abdullah Ali's burns were still raw from an air strike that brought down his building and killed his entire family a week ago in central Raqqa.

"My wife, mum, dad, all 14 people in my family were killed. Their bodies are trapped under rubble," the 24-year-old said, sitting outside a mosque on Raqqa's outskirts.

A boy who was among wounded people at Raqqa's frontline rests at a mosque in Raqqa, Syria, on 12 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Ali's neighbour Abdo Hussein said more than 50 people were in the building when the air strike hit. Just a handful survived and 13 bodies had been pulled out, he said.

The offensive to drive Islamic State out of Raqqa, its de facto Syrian capital which it seized in 2014, has long outlasted initial predictions by SDF officials who said ahead of a final assault in June that it could take just weeks.

The SDF said last week the city could be declared captured in the coming days.

There are still several hundred militants in the city and thousands of residents, the coalition says, many of them believed to be held hostage by IS in a hospital and nearby stadium.

"People had tried to escape before but were shot at by Daesh (Islamic State). I even saw them kill a two-year-old child," Um Moussa, 38, said, sitting inside the mosque.

"This morning they didn't seem to be around, or weren't firing.

"My son saw hordes of people leaving so we decided to go for it. I'd been sleeping fully dressed — we were ready to flee at the first chance," she said, wearing black robes and a face veil required under Islamic State's strict laws.

But weakening the militants with air power has come at a high cost in civilian lives, she and others said.

"Yesterday four entire families were killed in our area. It's strike after strike." —Reuters ■

Total 2,640 civilians killed in Afghan armed conflicts in first 9 months: UN

KABUL — Afghan civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts as 2,640 civilians were killed and some 5,379 others wounded in the first nine months of the year, the UN mission reported on its website Friday.

"Civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan remained near record high levels in the first nine months of the year," UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in a statement. However, the statement noted that UNAMA found a 6 percent decrease in the overall civilian causalities when compared to the same period in 2016.

"Civilian deaths increased by 1 per cent while the number of injured civilians reduced by 9 per cent," it said.—Xinhua ■

We can overcome challenges with strength of our unity

By Aye Min Soe

While the international community and biased media are using the terms "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" recklessly and irresponsibly regarding the issue in northern Rakhine State without first undertaking a proper and thorough legal analysis and making a judicial determination, Myanmar has announced the launching of a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability, development and the return of displaced communities to their homes.

Undeniably, Myanmar is facing a challenging situation caused by terrorist attacks launched by ARSA in Rakhine State and has had to deal with the consequences of actions by other actors.

Myanmar is a country where people with different faiths and belief systems are living in harmony. But situations have changed a lot after the deadly attacks by ARSA extremist terrorists in the northern region of Rakhine State.

To address the situation, the international community must refrain from taking measures that exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the situation.

> Rather than rebutting criticism and allegations with words, we will show the world by our actions and our deeds.

"We need to understand international opinion. However, just as no one can fully understand the situation of our country the way we do, no one can desire peace and development for our country more than us," said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her televised speech to the people on Thursday.

Rather than rebutting criticism and allegations with words, we will show the world by our actions and our deeds, she said, prioritizing three main tasks for putting the country's conflict ridden region back on the road to normalcy.

"The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine" has been established, allowing the Union Government and all local and international organizations to work in all sectors of the economy and all strata of society.

The Government and the people are ready and willing to cooperate with any kind of organization that wishes to work for resettlement and rehabilitation of people of all faiths in Rakhine State. We will work not only for repatriation of refugees who fled to Bangladesh, but also for the very small groups of ethnic people such as Daing-net, Mro and Hindus. The majority of those affected by the attacks were ethnic nationals, who were the minority (in the region).

Myanmar is currently at a turning point in its history. With the power of our nationals within and without, we can make this enterprise a milestone in our history. Now is the time to systematically use the generous nature of our people in terms of helping the enterprise with truth and purity.

Joining hands, we will tackle all the challenges we are facing using the strength of our unity.

Let's work hand in hand with the government

People hold State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi photos during the ceremony of interfaith praying in Yangon on 10 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

By Khin Maung Myint

Early last night, after listening to a short, but very emotional and passionate address to the nation by the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, I was greatly moved. Her speech was noticeably packed with sincerity, thoughtfulness and compassion, which she has on all the people of Myanmar, irrespective of race and religion. Above all there was no sign of anger, hatred or animosity towards any individual or country, which has been creating all the turmoil in the Northern Rakhine that are posing great difficulties and extreme challenges for the government recently.

She expressed her appreciation for the people of Myanmar for their understanding and unity and the show of support by standing with the government in such times of difficulties and extreme challenges. She also expressed that there was no power which can compare with the support of the people, trust of the people and the unity of the people and called for the people to be united to overcome all the difficulties the country was facing. I agree with her unreservedly. United we will overcome all difficulties and challenges, however extreme and serious they may be.

She clearly outlined the steps the government has planned to undertake in repatriation of those who had crossed over to Bangladesh and effective provision of humanitarian assistance, the resettlements and rehabilitation for those people, and the development programmes and establishing of durable peace in that region. Those are the most important and urgently needed remedies to bring absolute normalcy to that region. In my view, there was nothing that needs addressing left out in her report.

While making arrangements to help those returning from Bangladesh, she also had in mind, the welfare of the minority ethnic races of Rakhine, such as the Daing-nets, Mros, and also the Rakhine nationals and Hindus of those areas who suffered during the terrorist attacks.

She had also requested the Myanmar people who are famous as being the most generous people in the world, who are fond of meritorious donations to help the needy, and to come to the aid of the government in the rehabilitation process. All the Myanmar nationals at home and abroad, who can afford should help the government as the State Counsellor had requested, in such a time of need, by donating in cash or kind. Your donations will mean a lot to those destitute people and also greatly relieve the burdens on the Government too.

She expressed her appreciation for the local entrepreneurs, the CSOs, the NGOs, and the international community who had expressed their desires to give assistance in the various tasks in the resettlements, rehabilitations, developments, and the enhancements of the living conditions of the people of the Rakhine State. She also mentioned that, as it was a matter of national importance, the Union Government and the State/Region Governments would take the leading roles in implementing the resettlement, the rehabilitation and the development programmes. Thus the Union Government would give due regard and serious consideration to the sincere offers made at home and abroad. She also invited the people, the private sector, local NGOs, CSOs, friendly countries, the various UN agencies and INGOs to work together with the Union Government.

Also the fact that she herself would chair the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlements and Developments in Rakhine was a clear indication of the importance and the priority she placed on the tasks at hand. All in all, her report to the people or the address to the nation, concerning the plans that the Union Government had formulated, reflects the sincere intentions and priorities it had placed on the welfare of the people.

> The report to the people was very clear, precise, sincere and honest, and free of anger or animosity against anyone. There was no blaming or condemning any individual or organization or country.

Here I would like to mention my experience from yesterday morning. After my regular morning walk to the Kandawgyi, I went to a roadside eatery where I frequented, to have breakfast. It is situated in a Muslim residential quarter. I usually went there, not just to have breakfast, but to have discussion with those who care to listen to my explanations about the non-existent race who claimed, at first to be recognized as an ethnic race and when that failed, they claimed to have the right for citizenship. I managed to convince some who were liberal minded to accept my explanations.

While I was having breakfast yesterday morning, a Myanmar Muslim, an acquaintance of mine, who usually discussed with me about the developments in the Northern Rakhine, entered the shop on seeing me. As soon as he was within arm's reach of me, he shook my hand heartily, a gesture he had never done before. At first I was dumbfounded by his actions, but I was greatly moved by his remarks. He was full of praise for the State Counsellor. He told me that he was very pleased with her report to the people and that he believed every word she said and that she was very sincere.

I would like to conclude that the report to the people was very clear, precise, sincere and honest, and free of anger or animosity against anyone. There was no blaming or condemning any individual or organization or country. It was filled with empathy, compassion, love, and consideration towards the people without any discrimination whatsoever. Thus I would like to earnestly request all the people of Myanmar, irrespective of race or religion to be united and rally behind our leader and work hand in and with the government to bring about peace and harmony in Rakhine and elsewhere in the country.

POEM

Why not?

Leave hand to hand days
Heave hand in hand ways;

We were comrades in the fights
For our freedom and rights;

But we were painted difference colours
Divide and rule made us splinters;

In the mist of power struggle entity,
We're lost martyrs in anger of brutality

Under the iron heels and bayonet blade,
Fore-fathers gave up their lives for the country's sake;

It is beyond the bloody days
Seek the national reconciliation in different ways;

Leave the policy of hand to hand
Why not we stand hand in hand!!

UTA (Yangon University)

Sweet-smelling Truth

Sweet-smelling Truth will never lose
Her pervading fragrance of a rose
No matter foul slanders in blunders are thrown,
No matter filthy fake stories
with all sorts of distortions are in the air
Because Truth always collaborates with Time.

Sweet-smelling Truth will never be blown away
For her full blown petals of a rose
Have been forged, like a gladius,
from flaming blooms of steel,
Ever fresh, and delicate, yet stern and firm,
that never bow to the winds and weather!

Zaw Tun

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their works to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to **dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com** with the following information: **(1)** Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), **(2)** Real name and (if different) your penname, **(3)** Your level of education, **(4)** Name of your School/College/University, **(5)** A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, **(6)** A color photo of the submitter, **(7)** Copy of your NRC card, **(8)** Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).– **Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office**

G-7 vows to apply "maximum economic pressure" on North Korea

WASHINGTON — Group of Seven finance chiefs on Thursday pledged to apply "maximum economic pressure" on North Korea over the "grave" threat posed by its missile and nuclear weapons development, a senior Japanese official said.

The G-7 finance ministers and central bank governors affirmed close coordination in blocking North Korea's attempts to evade UN sanctions, Masatsugu Asakawa, vice finance minister for international affairs, told reporters after a meeting in Washington.

In separate talks of the broader Group of 20 major developed and emerging economies, Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda explained Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to put off the country's goal of achieving a primary balance surplus in fiscal 2020.

Abe's campaign pledge for the 22 October general election to boost spending on child care and education would make it virtually impossible for the government to achieve the goal, but Japan remains committed to restoring its debt-ridden finances, Kuroda was quoted by Asakawa as telling his G-20 counterparts.

"We shared the recognition that we need to apply maximum economic pressure on North Korea by blocking the sources of North Korea's income and preventing the country from abusing the international financial system," Asakawa said on the G-7 gathering. Measures include blocking financial trade that would promote North Korea's attempts to evade U.N. sanctions, said Asakawa, who attended the G-7 and G-20 meetings in lieu of Finance Minister Taro Aso.

Masatsugu Asakawa, Japan's vice finance minister for international affairs, tells reporters in Washington on 12 October 2017 that Group of Seven finance chiefs pledged to apply "maximum economic pressure" on North Korea over the "grave" threat posed by its missile and nuclear weapons development. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

"North Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles poses a grave threat to international peace and security," the official said. He said it is rare for the G-7 finance chiefs to make public the fact that they met on the sidelines of a G-20 financial meeting, in what he said was the G-7's resolve to step up pressure on North Korea to rein in its provocative behavior. The meeting was held under the leadership of Italy, which holds this year's presidency of the G-7. The group comprises Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

In the G-20 meeting, which runs to Friday, Kuroda explained Abe's plan to spend part of the revenues from a planned increase in the consumption tax to 10 per cent from 8 per cent in 2019 to expand child-rearing support and ease the financial burdens of preschool and higher education.

Such a shift would reduce resources intended to restore the nation's fiscal health, the worst among major advanced economies. The G-20 shared the view that a rollback in monetary easing in the United States and Europe could pose a downside risk to the otherwise sound world economy, according to Asakawa.

Earlier on Thursday, Kuroda expressed optimism about the world economy, but cited US economic and monetary policy and geopolitical tensions as risk factors to global growth.

"Although there are risks, including geopolitical ones, the standard scenario is that the world economy will continue steady growth with some acceleration," the BOJ chief told reporters at a Washington hotel.

Citing steady growth in the United States, Europe and emerging economies including China, Kuroda said the world economy is posting solid growth, but that "various uncertainties exist." Although Kuroda did not elaborate on US economic and monetary policy risk factors, he was apparently referring to the outlook for planned tax cuts and the pace of US interest rate increases, which could trigger reversals in capital and investment flows to emerging economies.

His citing of "geopolitical risks" was apparently a reference to North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons development programs.

Kuroda said the Japanese economy is "expanding moderately" and in "a very favorable condition," given a forward-looking cycle of income turning into spending. The International Monetary Fund has forecast the world economy will grow 3.6 per cent in 2017 and 3.7 per cent in 2018, up 0.1 percentage point, respectively, from its estimate in July, as the "broad-based" global recovery has gathered steam. The G-20 groups the G-7 plus Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey and the European Union.—Kyodo News ■

Trump's Iran plans driving EU toward Russia and China — Germany

BERLIN — US President Donald Trump's expected move to "de-certify" the international nuclear deal with Iran is driving a wedge between Europe and the United States and bringing Europeans closer to Russia and China, Germany said on Thursday.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has spoken out repeatedly against Trump's likely step, but his latest comments aimed to spell out the impact it would have in starker terms.

"It's imperative that Europe sticks together on this issue," Gabriel, a Social Democrat, told the RND German newspaper group. "We also have to tell the Americans that their behaviour on the Iran issue will drive us Europeans into a common position with Russia and China against the USA." Trump is seen unveiling a broad strategy on confronting Iran this week, likely on Friday, including a move to de-certify Iran's compliance with the 2015 accord, which he has called an "embarrassment" and the "worst deal ever negotiated."

Senior US officials, European allies and prominent US lawmakers have told Trump that refusing to certify the deal would leave the US isolated, concede the diplomatic high ground to Tehran, and ultimately risk the unravelling of the agreement.

The UN nuclear watchdog has repeatedly certified that Iran is adhering to restrictions on its nuclear energy programme mandated by the deal to help ensure it cannot be put to developing atomic bombs. Signed by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, the European Union and Iran, the deal lifted sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear work.—Reuters ■

WORLD BRIEFS

Russia, Saudi Arabia close to sign S-400 missile deal

MOSCOW – Russia and Saudi Arabia are on track to sign a contract on supplies of Russia's advanced S-400 air defence missiles to Riyadh, the Interfax news agency cited an aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin as saying on Friday.

"The talks are ongoing now, the terms are being agreed," the agency cited Vladimir Kozhin as saying. He said the contract could be signed "in the nearest time," giving no further detail.—Reuters ■

Cargo vessel sinks south of Ishigaki, 11 Indian crew members missing

FUKUOKA – A Hong Kong cargo vessel sank in the Pacific Ocean about 600 kilometers south of Ishigaki Island in Okinawa Prefecture early Friday, leaving 11 crew members missing while the remaining 15 were rescued, the Japan Coast Guard said.

The 11th Regional Coast Guard Headquarters based in Naha, Okinawa, received a distress call from the 33,205-ton Emerald Star at around 2 am Friday on which a total of 26 Indian crew members were aboard.

Fifteen crew members were rescued by three cargo boats that sailed nearby. The Japan Coast Guard dispatched patrol boats and aircraft to rescue those who went missing, but a typhoon hampered rescue operations, it said.—Kyodo News ■

Turkish Airlines plane makes emergency landing in Kenya after bird strike

MOMBASA, (Kenya) – A Turkish Airlines jet carrying 121 passengers and six crew made an emergency landing in Kenya on Friday after one of its engines sucked in a bird, police said.

Flight TK 673 was leaving Kenya's coastal city of Mombasa for Istanbul when the bird strike happened at around 4 am The plane circled around Mombasa for an hour to empty its fuel tank before it landed. No one injured. The plane was checked by technicians and took off again.—Reuters ■

Trump nails Obamacare with decision to cut off billions in subsidies

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump moved to undermine Obamacare dramatically late on Thursday by cutting off subsidies to health insurance companies for low-income patients, sparking threats of legal action and concern of chaos in insurance markets.

The decision is the most dramatic action Trump has taken yet to weaken the Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature healthcare law, which extended insurance to 20 million Americans.

The move drew swift condemnation from Democrats and threats from state attorneys general in New York and California to file lawsuits.

Trump has been frustrated by Republicans' failure to repeal and replace the law known as Obamacare, thwarting a promise he made during his successful 2016 presidential campaign.

His decision is likely to please those among his political base who detest the Obamacare system, which many Republicans have attacked for years as an unneeded government intrusion in Americans' healthcare.

US Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) applauds as US President Donald Trump signs an executive order to make it easier for Americans to buy bare-bones health insurance plans and circumvent Obamacare rules at the White House in Washington, US, on 12 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

In a nod to that same constituency, the president signed an executive order earlier on Thursday to make it easier for Americans to buy bare-bones health insurance plans exempt from Obamacare requirements.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi derided the subsidies cutoff in a joint statement, saying Trump would single-handedly push Americans' healthcare premiums higher.

"It is a spiteful act of vast, pointless sabotage leveled at working families and the middle class in every corner of America," they said. "Make no mistake about it, Trump will try to blame the Affordable Care Act, but this will fall on his back and he will pay the price for it."

Insurers and proponents of Obamacare have implored Trump for months to commit to making the payments, which are worth billions of dollars. Several insurers have cited uncertainty over the payments when hiking premiums for 2018 or exiting insurance markets altogether.

Healthcare stocks have edged lower in recent days. Ending the payments could hurt shares of insurers such as Anthem Inc, Molina, Cigna Corp and Centene, which are offering plans on Obamacare markets for 2018.

Trump has made the payments, guaranteed to insurers under Obamacare to help lower out-of-pocket medical expenses for low-income consumers, each month since taking office in January. But he has repeatedly threatened to cut them off and disparaged them as a "bailout" for insurance companies. — Reuters ■

Three skydivers die after suspected mid-air collision in Australia

SYDNEY — Three skydivers were killed in Australia on Friday after what authorities believe was a mid-air collision.

Two men aged in their 30s and a woman in her 50s are believed to have collided while skydiving near Cairns in northeastern Australia, police said. Their bodies were found about a mile from the designated landing site.—Reuters ■

India's Supreme Court refuses to lift ban on firecrackers in Delhi

NEW DELHI — India's Supreme Court Friday refused to lift the ban on the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and nearby cities in the run-up to the Hindu festival of Diwali.

The top court had recently imposed the ban on fireworks until Nov. 1, saying it wanted to test if it would make a difference to Delhi's air quality, ranked among the worst in the world.

"We are not going to relax the order on the sale of crackers. This is an experiment. After Diwali we will take stock of the situation," the court said.

The court's refusal to relax the ban came in the wake of an appeal by traders seeking more time to sell the unsold firecracker stocks for which they had already spent millions. However, those who had already bought firecrackers can still burst them during the Hindu festival of lights celebrated mostly across northern India. The judges also expressed sadness to the fact that a communal twist had been given to its order banning the sale of fireworks in Delhi and adjoining cities. "We are pained to hear that some people are trying to give a communal color to our order. It is sad," the court said. Diwali celebrates the victory of good over evil. People burst firecrackers to celebrate the festival.—Xinhua ■

China, ASEAN sign MoU to enhance cooperation in air accident investigation

SINGAPORE — A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China was signed on Friday in a bid to strengthen aviation safety through proactive investigation cooperation.

The document was signed at the close of the 23rd ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting in Singapore, between the authorities in charge of aircraft accident investigation of ASEAN member states and the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The transport ministers of ASEAN and China's Vice Minister of Transport Dai Dongchang witnessed the signing.

The MoU will enable ASEAN countries and China to share investigation facilities and equipment and investigation expertise to support aircraft accident investigation, offer investigation training slots to each other, share safety information, and facilitate the attachment of observers from other parties when conducting investigations.

The sharing of investigation resources, experience and training opportunities is expected to further enhance the investigators' capabilities and professionalism.

The two-day ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting and associated dialogue partner meetings were closed on Friday afternoon.

At the event, ASEAN transport ministers adopted the ASEAN Air Traffic Management Master Plan to support the establishment of the Seamless ASEAN Sky, which is expected to facilitate the flow of aircraft across ASEAN in a more integrated and harmonized manner.

They also signed two agreements to liberalize air services in the region.

Meanwhile, the ministers signed the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Flight Crew Licensing to facilitate the development and growth of the aviation sector; and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross Border Transport of Passengers by Road Vehicles (CBTP), which will make it easier for buses and coaches from one ASEAN country to enter another ASEAN country.

Khaw Boon Wan, Singapore's coordinating minister for infrastructure and minister for transport, said at the closing ceremony that the commitment of ASEAN countries to their transport cooperation will help them achieve ASEAN's Vision 2020 and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025.

"It will make a real difference to raising the quality of life for our people, creating good paying jobs and contributing to peace and stability in the region," he said.

The 24th ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting will convene in Thailand in 2018.—Xinhua ■

Elayne Whyte Gomez, chairwoman of UN negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, seen in this file photo, called on nations on 12 October 2017 to sign the treaty at an early date. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Nuke ban talks chair calls on nations to sign pact early

NEW YORK — The chairwoman of UN negotiations for the recently adopted landmark treaty banning nuclear weapons on Thursday called on nations to sign it at an early date.

In her oral report to the UN General Assembly's First Committee on disarmament and security issues, Elayne Whyte Gomez said 53 countries have signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons since its opening for signatures on 21 September. The Costa Rican ambassador to Geneva also expressed "deep congratulations" on the recent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for its efforts toward the adoption in July of the ban pact.

The treaty will enter into force 90 days after the document has been ratified by 50 nations, and will be legally effective for an unlimited duration.

Nuclear-armed countries, including the United States, and states that rely on the US nuclear deterrence such as Japan did not take part in the negotiations. During Thursday's First Committee session, US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood said the treaty's "obligations are vaguely worded, imprecise, and sometimes internally contradictory."

Also Thursday, Japan and other nations submitted their draft UN resolutions on nuclear disarmament, with the one led by Japan — the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack — making no mention of the ban treaty.

Japan has tabled a draft resolution on the abolition of nuclear weapons to the First Committee for 24 years in a row. All previous ones have been adopted by the General Assembly.—Kyodo News ■

South Korea, US to conduct joint maritime drills, US aircraft carrier to be mobilized

SEOUL — South Korea and the United States will conduct joint maritime drills next week in waters near the Korean Peninsula, with a US aircraft carrier to be mobilized.

The South Korean navy was quoted by local media outlets as saying the joint exercise with the US navy would be staged from next Monday to Friday in the eastern and western waters of South Korea.

Joining the drill from the US military would be USS Ronald Reagan nuclear-powered aircraft carrier under the US 7th Fleet. The super-carrier is accompanied by Aegis destroyers, guided missile cruisers, combat support ships and a nuclear-powered submarine. The drill, called Maritime Counter Special Operations Exercise, is aimed at defending the infiltration of enemy special forces, according to the navy.—Xinhua ■

CHANGE OF NAME

RAM BHARDWAJ SON OF MANOJ BHARDWAJ OF NO. FG 92, FMI CITY HLAING THAYAR TOWNSHIP YANGON. CHANGE HIS NAME TO BE READ AS ASMIT RAM BHARDWAJ SINCE TODAY.

13 taken to hospital as strong acid spills at science experiment

FUKUOKA — Thirteen children were taken to hospital Friday after hydrochloric acid spilled over during a science experiment class at an elementary school in Fukuoka, southwestern Japan, the local education board said.

The 13 six-graders felt poorly, with some complaining of headaches or sore eyes, according to the education board and other authorities.

The accident took place around 11:20 am at Nagazumi Elementary School in Fukuoka's Minami Ward when one of the pupils spilled around 3 milliliters of hydrochloric acid by mistake on a table from a test tube. —Kyodo News ■

Firefighters hold a screen to obscure a child being transported to hospital from Nagazumi Elementary School in Fukuoka, southwestern Japan, on 13 October 2017, after hydrochloric acid spilled during a science experiment. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Iran deal's foes in US Congress may be its unlikely saviours

WASHINGTON — Republicans in the US Congress, long the staunchest opponents of the Iran nuclear deal, may be the best hope for preserving it if President Donald Trump declines on Friday to certify that Tehran is complying with the pact.

Every Republican in Congress opposed the international accord reached under Democratic former President Barack Obama two years ago. Joined by several Democrats, they nearly passed legislation to kill the deal in which Iran agreed to curb its disputed nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

However, with the agreement in place and strongly supported by co-signers Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China, many Republicans who still abhor the pact nevertheless do not want to blow it up for fear that doing so would erode US credibility. They want to find other ways to clamp down on Tehran.

Meeting with officials from the Trump and Obama administrations, European diplomats and among themselves, they have been preparing strategies to save it, including pushing for tougher inspections, changing the law requiring Trump to certify Tehran's compliance and setting new sanctions over Iran's non-nuclear activities.

"As flawed as the deal is, I believe we must enforce the hell out of it," Representative Ed Royce, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said on Wednesday.

On Friday, Trump is expected to unveil a broad strategy for Iran, including announcing that he will decertify the agreement ahead of an October 15 deadline, although he could always change his mind.

If the Republican president goes ahead, that would open a 60-day window in which Congress could reimpose sanctions, a step towards an unravelling of the deal.

The US flag flies in front of the Capitol Dome at the US Capitol in Washington, US, on 12 September 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

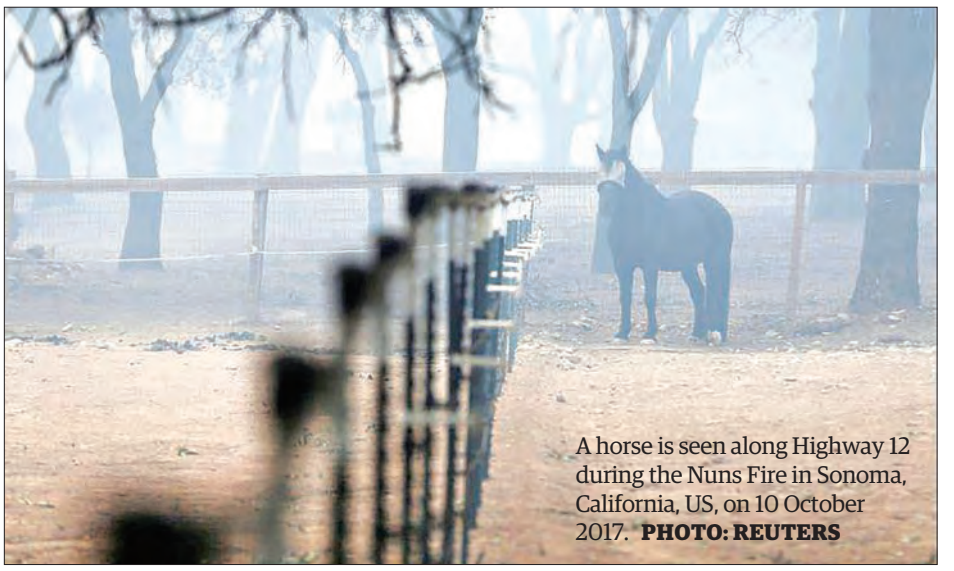
However, Trump is not expected to call on lawmakers to revive those sanctions. If he stops short of recommending that, it gives Republicans room to stand pat for now.

Daniel Kurtzer, a former US ambassador to Israel who is now a professor at Princeton University, said the political pressure could be intense. "There will be an onslaught of phone calls and letters and visits to senators to 'do something' about Iran," he said.—Reuters ■

California woman rescues horses, yaks and cows from deadly wildfires

SONOMA —The acrid smell of smoke borne on hurricane-strength winds greeted horse trainer Rebecca Cushman before dawn, her phone ringing repeatedly as people frantically sought help saving their animals from California's deadly wildfires.

It was still dark on Monday morning when Cushman, 41, set out from her farm west of the conflagration, towing a four-horse trailer behind her white Dodge pickup truck.



A horse is seen along Highway 12 during the Nuns Fire in Sonoma, California, US, on 10 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

She worked all day and into the night, loading four horses at a time from fire-ravaged farms and ranches in Sonoma and Napa counties, taking the animals back to her farm in West Petaluma before going out for more. By Thursday, she had helped rescue 48 horses, several cows and even some yaks in the bucolic vineyard and farm country north of San Francisco hit by the state's deadliest wildfires in nearly a century. "We have dogs, goats, guinea fowl, chickens, ducks, donkeys, miniature horses and horses at our farm right now," Cushman said on Thursday. "I just finished helping load yaks and cows." Firefighters began to gain ground on Thursday against blazes that have killed at least 31 people in Northern California and left hundreds missing amid mass evacuations in the heart of the state's wine country. Animals are difficult to rescue in disasters like California's fast-moving wildfires, as their owners must often choose between staying behind to care for them or fleeing to protect their own lives and those of their family members. Some animals, including many rescued by Cushman, found refuge at privately owned farms outside the fire zone. Others were sheltered at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa. The first calls there for help came in at about 12:30 am on Monday, as winds of up to 75 miles per hour (121 km per hour) whipped fires throughout the state into dangerous conflagrations, said fairgrounds spokeswoman Leasha LaBruzzi.

By Thursday, the fairgrounds housed more than 300 horses, LaBruzzi said. It had also become a temporary home to 200 people who fled the fires with their pets. —Reuters ■

A farmer stands in her flooded house after a tropical depression in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on 13 October 2017.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Death toll from worst Viet Nam floods in years rises to 54

HANOI — At least 54 people died and 39 went missing as destructive floods battered northern and central Viet Nam this week, the disaster prevention agency said on Friday.

Viet Nam is prone to destructive storms and flooding due to its long coastline. A typhoon wrecked havoc across central provinces just last month.

The floods that hit Viet Nam this week starting on Monday are the worst in years, state-run Viet Nam Television quoted agriculture minister Nguyen Xuan Cuong as saying.

Nineteen people from four neighbouring households in Hoa Binh were buried alive early on Thursday after a landslide struck around midnight on Wednesday, but only nine bodies have been found, the disaster agency said in a report.

Some 317 homes have collapsed in floods and landslides this week, while more than 34,000 other houses have been submerged or damaged.

More than 22,000 hectares (54,300 acres) of rice have also been damaged and around 180,000 animals killed or washed away.

Floods have also affected seven of 77 provinces in Thailand, Viet Nam's neighbor to the west, that country's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said on Thursday.

More than 480,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) of agricultural land Thailand have been hit, the department said.—Reuters ■

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Steven Seagal meets 'The Punisher' Duterte, talks drug war

MANILA — US actor Steven Seagal, famous for playing action roles like a vice squad detective in "Above the Law", met Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte while on a location scouting trip in Manila.

Video footage released by government channel RTVM showed Seagal animatedly talking to Duterte.

Seagal, 65, was in the Philippines to look for a location for his upcoming movie which will be "about illegal drugs and other crimes", a presidential palace statement said.

The statement said that Duterte told Seagal that "movies are a reflection of life" and "reiterated his strong stance against illegal drugs because it enslaves people to a form of synthetic chemical."

President Rodrigo Duterte with visiting American actor Steven Seagal (L) gestures during his courtesy call at the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila, Philippines, on 12 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Duterte has been involved in a deadly drug war since taking office last June, and on Wednesday ordered all drug operations be left to the drug enforcement agency, amid unprecedented scrutiny of police conduct in the brutal crackdown that has left thousands of Filipinos dead. Earlier this week, Seagal said at a news conference in Manila that he didn't think the Philippines was "a dangerous place".

"It's a place that's up and coming with the new leadership," the Philippine Star reported him as saying.

Duterte was nicknamed "The Punisher" due to his zero-tolerance of crime and drugs during the 22 years he was mayor of southern Davao City.

A former martial arts instructor, Seagal is famous for action hero roles in blockbuster movies in the 1990s, such as "Under Siege" and "Hard To Kill".

He has also starred in a reality television series called "Steven Seagal: Lawman", in which he carries out duties as a reserve deputy sheriff in Louisiana. —Reuters ■

Happy Amitabh Bachchan is a part of 'Brahmastra': Ayan

MUMBAI — Filmmaker Ayan Mukerji said he is elated that megastar Amitabh Bachchan is on board his next directorial "Brahmastra".

After directing two coming-of-age movies such as, "Wake Up Sid" and "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani", the 34-year-old director will helm the fantasy adventure series, backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions.

"It's a great honour for me to work with him. Ever since the film was conceptualised I wanted to approach him (Bachchan) for it and make it with him. I am very happy he is part of the team 'Brahmastra'," Ayan told reporters here. He was speaking on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of Jio MAMI 19th Mumbai Film Festival last night.— PTI ■

53rd Chicago film festival opens with courtroom drama

CHICAGO — The pulse-racing, real-life story of a black chauffeur fighting his wealthy employer in a rape and attempted murder case that boosted the US civil rights movement kicked off the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF) Thursday night.

Reginald Hudlin, director of the 2017 biopic "Marshall", and its key actors walked the red carpet at the AMC River East 21 theater, where a long line formed to attend the screening of feature film starring Chadwick Boseman, Josh Gad, Kate Hudson, Dan Stevens, Sterling K. Brown and James Cromwell.

"I'm quite excited about opening the festival with 'Marshall' today," CIFF artistic director Mimi Plauche said. "The film recounts a story from America's civil rights movement and it continues to resonate today."

"Marshall" is based on an incident in the life of Thurgood Marshall, descendant of an African family forced into slavery in the United States and the first black judge in the US Supreme Court, when he was a young lawyer.

Against the backdrop of a United States on the brink of World War II, Marshall was sent to defend Joseph Spell, a black chauffeur who was falsely accused of rape and attempted murder of his socialite employer in conservative Connecticut.

Marshall, along with his partner sam Friedman, a Jewish lawyer, fought against fear and prejudice in a segregationist court. The sensational trial helped set the groundwork for the civil rights movement.

"Many young people are not familiar (with) the hard legal battles we fought," said John Marshall, Thurgood Marshall's son who attended the opening of the film festival. "If a black and a Jewish attorney could do so much then, we can do a lot today, and a lot still needs to be done."

"The film wouldn't have been done if it didn't get Chinese funding," said Boseman, who plays Marshall in the film. "I'm incredibly grateful for their interest in our story."

Boseman said he has never been to China but would love to go there.

Hudlin said the film would "definitely" be shown in China, adding that he was very excited about the prospect.

"Whenever black and Chinese culture mix, it's always a tremendous success," he said, in a reference to martial arts icon Bruce Lee's films and other projects.

Of more than 5,000 films submitted from 95 countries, the festival selected 139 features.

Plauche said the theme of the festival differs each year. The 53rd CIFF is focusing on film noir, which, she said, "is a reflection of the general mood in the world today."

Competition categories at the festival include international, new directors, and documentary. The winner of the international competition will be awarded the top honor, the Gold Hugo.

The CIFF will run till 26 October.—Xinhua ■

Bruno Mars leads music's AMA nominations as female artists edged out

LOS ANGELES — The men of pop and hip hop led the nominations for the American Music Awards (AMA) on Thursday, while female artists were left out of most categories.

Bruno Mars led with eight nominations, including Artist of the Year, the top accolade of the night. He will face hip hop stars Drake and Kendrick Lamar, British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran and electro-pop DJ duo The Chainsmokers - each of whom landed five nominations - for the coveted award.

The women of pop music failed to land nominations in categories such as Artist of the Year, Video of the Year and Tour of the Year.

Pop star Halsey, one of the few female artists to land nominations for her collaboration with The Chainsmokers on the hit song "Closer," tweeted on Thursday that she was "really disappointed" at the male-dominated nominees list.

"So many incredible female artists have released this year. hoping the coming award shows give them the credit that is due to them," she said.

Halsey landed two nominations, in the favourite pop/rock song and collaboration of the year categories for "Closer," but did not land any solo nominations despite having had a chart-topping album earlier this year.

Notable omissions include Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus, Lorde, Demi Lovato, Lana Del Rey and Kesha, all of whom released new songs and albums this year, as well as Taylor Swift, who released a high-concept video in August for her single "Look What You Made Me Do."

The AMA nominees are selected through measurements on fan interactions across Billboard Magazine and Billboard.com, which include figures from music sales, touring, streaming and radio airplay and social activity from 9 September 2016 to 14 September 2017, organizers said.

The winners of the American Music Awards are voted for by fans and will be announced at a live ceremony televised on ABC on 19 November.—Reuters ■

Coordination meeting on formation Asia Buddhist Association concludes

A ceremony to mark successful conclusion of coordination meeting to form Asia Buddhists Association was held at Karaweik Palace Hotel in Yangon.

First Deputy Rector of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko and Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein offered oil lamp, water and fruits to a Buddha image.

Next, State Sangha Maha Nayaka member Agga Maha Pandita Dhamma Yaungchi Monastery's Sayadaw Bhaddanta Agga Dhamma and leading Sayadaws from Thailand, Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Sri Lanka delivered speeches.

Afterwards Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko said the coordination meeting to form Asia Buddhists Association is an auspicious occasion that is welcomed by Buddhists and those who appreciate and value Buddha's Dhamma. All can now work hand-in-hand under the Association for the existence and proliferation of the Sasana. Friendship and good relation among Buddhist countries and Buddhists throughout the world can now be established. All need to strive toward and implement a secure and equal social life without hesitation. All can now condemn the propagation of terrorism by using religion, spreading of false news, creating of conflicts and wars as well as supporting and abetting unfair acts.

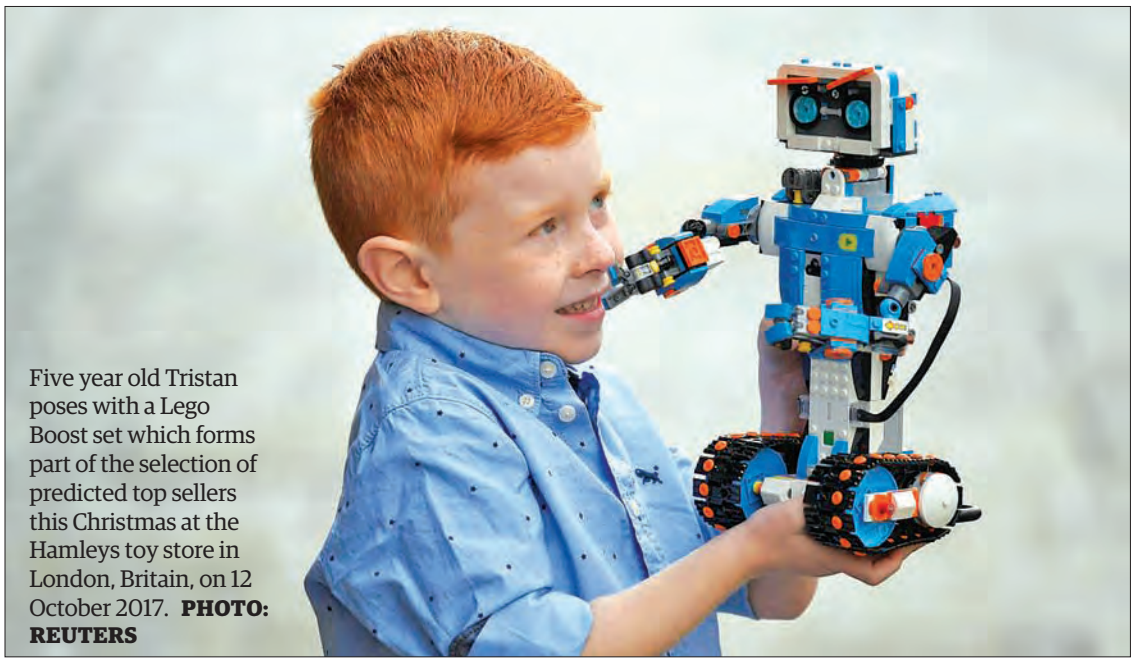
Furthermore, Buddhist leaders, with the help of Buddha Sasana, can strive toward establishing a fair and unequivocal society. They can now participate for the development of a secure and peaceful world by recognizing the value of sustainable peace that other religious beliefs had indicated added the Union Minister.

Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein then spoke about religious matters and then Yangon Region Sangha Nayaka Chairman Sayadaw Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadaza Dr. Bhaddanta Eidibala delivered a speech.

All Myanmar Theravada Buddhism organisation and border and mountain region Sasana nugaha association chairman Dr. Khin Shwe delivered a word of thanks on the successful conclusion of the event.

Leading Sayadaws from foreign countries then presented certificate of honors to Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko and Dr. Khin Shwe.

Finally, Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko, Yangon Region Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint and Dr. Khin Shwe presented certificate of honors to donors who donated for the holding of coordination meeting to form Asia Buddhists Association.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Five year old Tristan poses with a Lego Boost set which forms part of the selection of predicted top sellers this Christmas at the Hamleys toy store in London, Britain, on 12 October 2017. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Toy-telligence the smart choice for children at Christmas

LONDON — Tyler the Playful Tiger, who roars, purrs and moves during play is among a group of animatronic toys tipped to be the most in demand for Christmas, according to the world's oldest toy shop.

Hamleys, where Britain's Queen Elizabeth once bought toys for her children, are predicting the "toy-telligence" sector to prove the big hit of 2017, with the bulk of their top 10 for Christmas list featuring artificial intelligence or robotics.

"There is definitely a (tech) influence coming through in toys ... it has become very sophisticated," Hamleys head buyer Victoria Kay told Reuters on Thursday.

"These toys learn and develop as appose to a tech toy which will always say the same thing back to you."

A Luvabella Doll that learns phrases, reacts when you tickle its feet and plays peak-a-boo was also in the top 10, along with a globe that speaks facts and figures on different countries when tapped with a stylus pen.

With just 74 days before Christmas, many children were busy trying out the "toy-telligence" range at Hamleys' 136-year-old flagship toy emporium in London on Thursday before finalising their wish list for Santa Claus.

"(I prefer toys) that talk back to me," said six-year-old Lilly Hulkes-Dudman, clutching Tyler the Playful Tiger.—Reuters ■

WEATHER //

Rain expected over southern parts of Myanmar due to depression in Bay of Bengal

By Sandar Soe

Yangon, southern Bago Region, northern Mon State of Mottama Gulf area, are expected to see rain as a tropical depression (TD 24) moving to South China Sea over Bay of Bengal has been intensified into a depression, according to Dr. Tun Lwin, a prominent weather expert of Myanmar.

The weather system is most likely to persist as a low pressure area over central Bay of Bengal by 14 to 17 October.

On 18 October, this system may further intensify into a depression. The depression is expected to move in North-northwest direction and to continue travelling inlands after passing eastern coastal regions of India on 20 October, said the former Director-General of the Myanmar's Meteorology and Hydrology Department on his facebook post.

Due to the depression, southwest monsoon over South Bay of Bengal may see a revival of monsoon. Monsoon is likely to rise and monsoon like weather persist along coastal parts of Myanmar, he said.

According to observation made at 7:00 pm on 13 October by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH), weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in Bay of Bengal.

The DMH forecasted that there will be a scattering of rain or thundershowers or fairly wide spread in Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine states and Magway, Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions. It is also expected to be widespread in other areas of Myanmar.

Concerning flood warning issued at 3:00 pm observation, the DMH warned that the water level of Sittaung River at Taungoo has reached its danger level and may rise about (1/2) foot during the next (1) day. The weathermen has advised the people who settle near the river bank and low lying area at Taungoo Township of Sittaung River, to take precautionary measures.

Three mascot designs shortlisted for 2020 Tokyo Games before final pick

TOKYO — A panel examining entries for the official mascot of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics shortlisted three designs on Friday ahead of a vote by elementary school classrooms across Japan from December for the final selection.

The panel chose the designs -- described by one of its members as being "distinctive to Japan" -- out of 16 candidates selected through a screening process held in September.

"As we Japanese people are used to characters and stuffed toys, the selected designs were those that one can easily picture," Takeshi Natsuno, another panel member and a guest professor of Keio University's Graduate School of Media and Governance, said at a press conference.

The final design will be decided after elementary school students nationwide cast their votes from 11 December.

Yoshiko Ikoma, a fashion journalist and vice chairwoman of the mascot screening committee, said it is rare in the history of the Olympics for elementary students to decide on an official mascot. The three shortlisted works will be made public in early December following trademark checks. The final design will be announced around February to March.—Kyodo News ■

History hopes to repeat itself for Aung La N Sang

Kyaw Zin Lin

Aung La N Sang seen with middle weight champion belt of One Championship after beating Bigdash in Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon on 30 June, 2017. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Aung La N Sang, also known as Burmese Python became the ONE Middleweight World Champion by defeating Vitaly Bigdash on 30 June in Yangon, giving Myanmar one of its greatest sporting achievements.

With that victory, he also became Myanmar's first World Champion, and the most successful middleweight in the promotion's history with a solid five wins.

Aung La N Sang was born in Myitkyina, Kachin State in Myanmar, and was already a gifted athlete while a student in Yangon before he moved to the United States in 2003. The following year, he began training in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and other martial arts while studying Agriculture Science at Andrews University in Michigan, and was instantly hooked.

After graduating, he travelled all over the country and worked to make money for his family. He eventually decided to dedicate his life to martial arts. Aung La N Sang made his professional debut in 2005, and soon built a reputation for his outstanding skills, earning himself the nickname of the "Burmese Python". The nickname was appropriate considering his talent and fighting effectiveness.

After signing up for the ONE Championship in 2014, Aung La N Sang returned to Myanmar to grab the middleweight championship title on 30 June at ONE: LIGHT OF A NATION in Yangon, an achievement that made a history for Myanmar. Now he is using all of his celebrity and international fame for the greater good by working towards the advancement of his fellow countrymen in Myanmar.

In addition to that, he is leading a martial arts movement in Myanmar, and helping out hungry competitors in Myanmar.

The Myanmar hero will fight against Muay Thai and kickboxing heavyweight world champion Alain Ngalani "The Panther" at Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar on 3 November. ■

Myanmar U-19 footballers in Japan

Kyaw Zin Lin

The Myanmar national U-19 football team has been training since Wednesday at the Dream Camp football training center in Osaka, Japan.

The trip aims to improve the attacking positions of the team and for the young footballers to gain knowledge on the techniques used by Japanese football teams and to apply it systematically, said a team official.

A total of 25 Myanmar U-19 footballers were selected, and head coach U Chit Naing will manage the team during the training in Japan.

The team's training will last for 10 days.

During the trip, the Myanmar U-19 team will play a friendly with Hannan University Club on 15 October and 20 October, and Gamba Osaka U-18 FC on 18 October.

Myanmar will leave Japan for Cambodia for the AFC U-19 Championship Group G qualifiers that will be played in Phnom Penh from 24 to 28 October. ■

BeIn Sports' Paris office searched as part of criminal probe

PARIS — The Paris offices of BeIN Sports were searched on Thursday as part of a criminal probe against former FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke and Qatar's beIN Media Chief Executive Nasser Al-Khelaifi, French authorities said.

The French financial prosecutor's office issued a statement on Thursday saying that two of its representatives, along with other French officials dealing with anti-corruption and tax avoidance affairs, had carried out the search.

It added that the operation had been carried out in conjunction with the EuroJust body and Swiss authorities. —Reuters ■

Former FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke presents the World Cup Trophy during the preliminary draw for the 2018 FIFA World Cup at Konstantin Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2015. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Chinese Super League to bring in foreign refs for final rounds

HONG KONG — Chinese football authorities have announced foreign referees will be drafted in to work on the final weeks of the Chinese Super League season in a move to boost the standard of officiating in the big-spending league.

Sweden's Jonas Eriksson and Tony Chapron from France will referee Tianjin Quanjian's meeting with Shandong Luneng and Shanghai Shenhua's clash with Tianjin Teda respectively as the first part of a move to "improve the accuracy of officiating", the Chinese Football Association said in a statement on Thursday.

"In order to ensure a smooth finish to the season, from Round 27 onwards the Chinese Football Association will invite referees from Europe and the Americas to officiate on crucial games," the statement said. —Reuters ■